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CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

S.B. 694 AN ACT CONCERNING ALTERNATE MEMBERS OF ZONING BOARDS OF  
APPEALS  
TESTIMONY OF JAMES BAILEY BRISLIN

Senator Cassano, Representative Rojas, Senator Fasano, Representative Aman, distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee, good morning.

My name is James Bailey Brislin. I am a citizen of Enfield, Connecticut and am an alternate on the Zoning Board of Appeals in that town. I come before you this morning asking you to enact S.B. 694, "An Act Concerning Alternate Members of Zoning Board of Appeals".

As I had stated earlier, I am alternate member of the Enfield ZBA. One of the things that I've discovered in the course of my service on ZBA is that Planning and Zoning alternates have more privileges than ZBA alternates. For example, Planning and Zoning alternates are allowed to attend executive session and are allowed full participation in public hearings. As a ZBA alternate, I have been barred from executive sessions of my ZBA and been stopped from speaking by the chairman of my ZBA.

Alternates can do more than sit in their seats and wait for commissioners to be absent. I believe that allowing ZBA alternates full participatory rights will provide for a better dialogue on land use issues. For example, last year a disabled woman brought forward a variance application to the Enfield ZBA. I have a background in fair housing and civil rights. The dialogue about her variance application moved forward without any reference whatsoever to providing a reasonable accommodation. Because none of the commissioners were absent, all I could do was ask the applicant questions. This is a good example of how allowing full participatory rights to alternates could provide for a broader public dialogue on land use issues.

I do believe that alternates have much to add to a ZBA's dialogue on land use issues. Please enact S.B. 694 and allow ZBA alternates to contribute the full measure of their talents to the municipal land use regulatory process.